United Nations A/AC.172/2017/L.3/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: Limited
6 September 2017

Original: English

**Committee on Conferences**
**Substantive session of 2017**
5-11 September 2017
Agenda item 8
**Adoption of the report and proposed dates for the organizational and substantive sessions in 2018**

# Draft report

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## II. Meetings management

### A. Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2018 and 2019

1. At its 548th meeting, on 5 September 2017, the Committee considered a letter dated 6 March 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Chair of the Committee (A/AC.172/2017/3) and agreed to discuss further the request for Nowruz to be included in the list of non-official holidays of the United Nations during informal consultations at its current session.

2. The Committee also reviewed and adopted the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2018 and 2019 (A/AC.172/2017/L.2).

**Discussion**

3. A number of delegations expressed their support for the inclusion of Nowruz in the list of non-official holidays.

4. One delegation asked whether there were guidelines for proposing and designating non-official holidays and sought clarification regarding the implications of including additional holidays for the programme of work and operations of the United Nations. A representative of the Secretariat said that there were no such guidelines. When the question of including additional holidays had been raised in previous years, there had been much discussion about whether the issue fell within the remit of the Committee at all. However, since no other committee was mandated to do so, the Committee on Conferences had become the forum for discussing such questions. The representative further explained that if the request were approved by



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the General Assembly, United Nations bodies at Headquarters and other duty stations where Nowruz was observed would be invited, but not obliged, to avoid holding meetings on the date of Nowruz.

5. Several delegations said that it would be useful to clarify the criteria for proposing and approving the inclusion of additional holidays in the list of non-official holidays. Another delegation said that there was no need for such guidelines given that such requests were ultimately forwarded to the Fifth Committee for approval by Member States. A number of delegations said that they wished to discuss the inclusion of Nowruz further during the consideration of the draft resolution on the pattern of conferences.

6. With regard to the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2018 and 2019, one delegation said that the second part of the resumed session of the Fifth Committee should be extended to enable the Committee to complete its work. The allotted period of four weeks was not sufficient. In addition, overlap between the sessions of the Fifth Committee and the Committee for Programme and Coordination posed a challenge for both conference services and delegates. The delegation asked the Secretariat to provide a table detailing the scheduled opening and closing dates of the sessions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the second part of the resumed session of the Fifth Committee, as well as of ad hoc formal meetings held after the scheduled closing dates and the actual closing dates of the second part of the resumed session of the Fifth Committee, for the previous five years.

7. One delegation noted that in 2017, Eid al-Adha had fallen on 1 September, yet the United Nations had declared the holiday to be 31 August. A representative of the Secretariat explained that of the two possible dates provided by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation at the start of the year, the United Nations had selected 31 August, as having the holiday on 1 September would have delayed the start of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly by one week.

## B. Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

8. At its 548th meeting, on 5 September 2017, the Committee considered the sections of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/72/116, sect. II.B, and supplementary information,[1] sect. I.A) containing information on the requests received for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243, by which the Assembly decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly might meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

### Conclusions and recommendations

9. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly explicitly authorize the following bodies to meet in New York during the main part of its seventy-second session, on the understanding that all such meetings would be allocated conference services on an "as available" basis, in such a way that the work of the Assembly and its Main Committees would not be impeded:**

(a) **Committee on Relations with the Host Country;**

(b) **Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People;**

[1] See http://coc.dgacm.org/2017/Documents/2017_Supplementary_Information.pdf.

(c) **Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services;**

(d) **Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund;**

(e) **Independent Audit Advisory Committee;**

(f) **Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.**

## C. Intersessional departures

10. The General Assembly, in its resolution 71/262, approved the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2017, as submitted by the Committee on Conferences, and authorized the Committee to make any adjustments that might become necessary as a result of actions and decisions taken by the Assembly at its seventy-first session. The calendar was issued as A/AC.172/2017/2.

11. The Committee on Conferences approved the following requests:

(a) Request from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to extend its autumn session of 2016 by three days in order to provide the Committee's report to the General Assembly in a timely manner;

(b) Request from the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters to convene its sixty-seventh session in Geneva rather than in New York, from 25 to 27 January 2017;

(c) Request from the Independent Audit Advisory Committee to hold its thirty-eighth session in Vienna from 19 to 21 April 2017;

(d) Request from the chairs of the human rights treaty bodies to hold their twenty-ninth annual meeting in New York instead of in Geneva, from 27 to 30 June 2017;

(e) Request from the Board of Auditors to hold its forty-seventh special session in Rome instead of in New York, on 1 December 2017;

(f) Request from the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations, the Specialized Agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency to hold its fifty-eighth session in Rome instead of in New York, on 30 November and 1 December 2017;

(g) Request from the Independent Audit Advisory Committee to extend its fortieth session by one day, from 12 to 15 December 2017, to enable the United Nations system oversight committees to meet, hosted by the Committee in the context of its fortieth session;

(h) Request from the Independent Audit Advisory Committee to hold its forty-first session in Nairobi instead of in New York, from 21 to 23 April 2018.

## D. Utilization of conference-servicing resources by United Nations organs

12. At its 548th meeting, on 5 September 2017, the Committee on Conferences considered the section of the report containing an analysis of the utilization of conference-servicing resources by United Nations organs (A/72/116, paras. 10-14, and supplementary information, sects. I.C and I.D).

13. The Chair said that, as in previous years, letters would be sent to the presiding officers of the calendar bodies whose utilization rate had fallen below the 80 per cent benchmark over the previous six years.

**Discussion**

14. One representative said that the formula for calculating the rate of utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities was not sufficient, as it did not factor in the occupancy rate of meeting rooms or the actual number of working days, and asked the Secretariat to examine the possibility of expanding the formula. A representative of the Secretariat said that the formula applied to the use of interpretation services, not meeting rooms. The occupancy rate of some rooms was low because they were reserved for the meetings of specific bodies, but the occupancy rate of most rooms, in particular small and medium-sized ones, was extremely high.

## E. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required"

15. At the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report concerning the provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required" (A/72/116, para. 15, and supplementary information, sect. I.D).

## F. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

16. Also at the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report concerning the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States (A/72/116, paras. 16-18, and supplementary information, sect. I.D).

## G. Meetings held away from established headquarters

17. Also at its 548th meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report concerning meetings held away from established headquarters (A/72/116, paras. 21 and 22, and supplementary information, sect. I.F).

## H. Utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

18. At the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report concerning the utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/72/116, para. 19, and supplementary information, sect. I.D).

## I. Utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa

19. Also at the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report concerning the utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa (A/72/116, para. 20, and supplementary information, sect. I.D).